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# Labour Force Status of Families

Explores how families engage with the labour market

Reference period June 2021

Released 12/10/2021

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## Key statistics

In June 2021:

- There were 7.3 million families, an increase of 1 million since June 2011
- 1 in 7 families were one parent families (15.0%)
- There were 1.4 million jobless families (19.5%)
- Of the 6.1 million couple families, 1.6% were same-sex couples

## COVID-19 Impacts

The latest annual data presented in this release of Labour Force Status of Families

was collected in June 2021 and reflects the labour market conditions at that point in time. In June, Labour Force data reflected impacts from a lockdown in Victoria, but it was before the larger impacts from the longer lockdowns in New South Wales, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory.

Given the extent of major changes in the labour market during the pandemic, quarterly estimates have also been included in this release, for the months of March, June, September and December of 2019 and 2020, and for the first half of 2021. These estimates have been included with the release of annual estimates in the Data Downloads and in the TableBuilder release.

[Microdata: Labour Force Status of Families, Australia \(TableBuilder\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/6224.0.00.001Main+Features1Australia)  
(<https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/6224.0.00.001Main+Features1Australia>)

While the quarterly estimates are expected to be a temporary addition to this release, a final set of quarterly estimates may be included in the June 2022 release.

## What is a family?

A family is defined as two related people who live in the same household. This includes all families such as couples with and without children, including same-sex couples, couples with dependants, single mothers or fathers with children, and siblings living together. At least one person in the family has to be 15 years or over. A household may contain more than one family.

See the [Labour Force Status of Families methodology \(https://www.abs.gov.au/methodologies/labour-force-status-families-methodology/jun-2021\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/methodologies/labour-force-status-families-methodology/jun-2021) for more information.

## Main features

- For couple families with dependants, joblessness decreased 29.6% since June 2020, after an increase of 53.5% from June 2019.
- 9.3% of families with children under 15 were jobless families.
- Couple families with both partners employed increased 5.6% since June 2020.
- Couple families with dependants where neither parent was employed decreased 24.4%

since June 2020.

- 24.4% of couple families with children aged 0-4 years have both parents working full-time.
- 73.7% of couple families with children under 15 have mothers who are employed.
- 24.5% of couple families with children under 15 have one parent employed.

## All families

In June 2021, there were 7.3 million families, an increase of 1 million (16.6%) since June 2011. Of these:

- 6.1 million (83.4%) were couple families
- 1.1 million (15.0%) were one parent families with 79.8% of these being single mothers
- 111,000 (1.5%) were classified as 'other families', where at least two people were related in some way other than as a couple or as a parent and child (such as adult-age siblings) (Table 1)

3.3 million (45.5%) were families with dependants, of which 81.1% were families with children under 15 (Table 1)

The following flowchart summarises the breakdown of the main family types

► Image

► Description

## Couple families

Couple families are formed around two people in a couple relationship who both usually reside in the same household. Couple families can be formed around opposite-sex couples or same-sex couples, and they can be with or without dependants (which include children under 15 and dependent students aged 15-24 years).

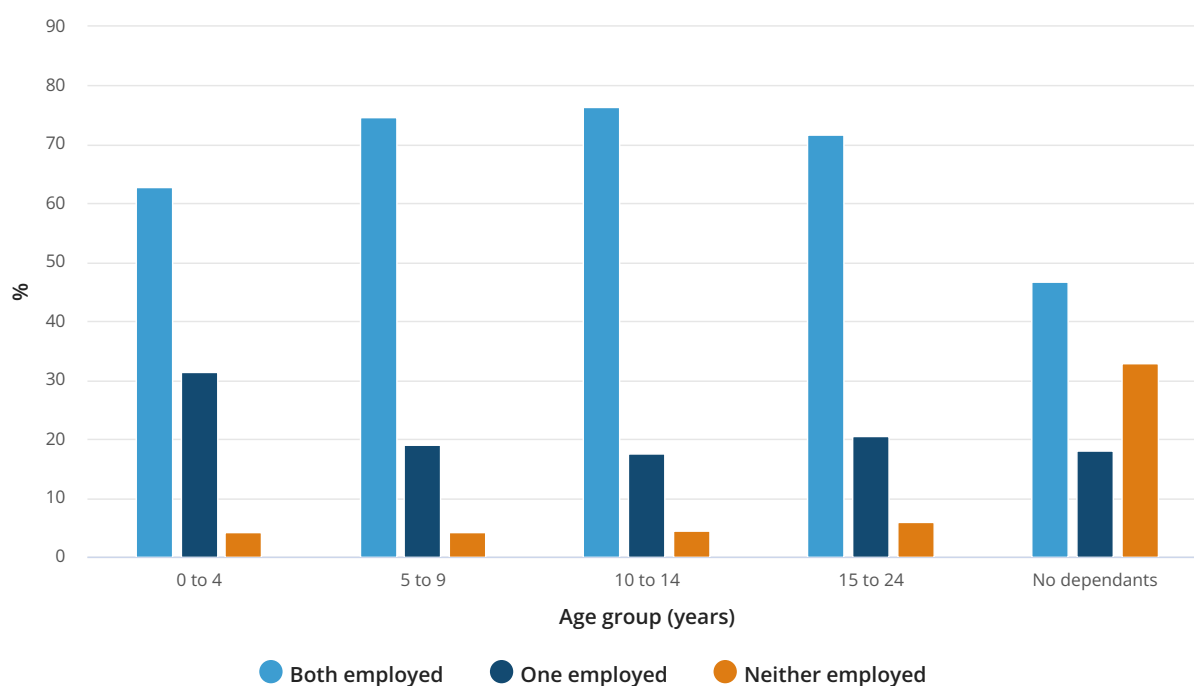
In June 2021, there were 6.1 million couple families, including:

- 2.6 million opposite-sex couple families with dependants
- 3.4 million couple families without dependants
- 99,000 same-sex couple families, an increase from 32,000 in June 2011 and an increase

from 83,000 since June 2020, and

- 1.9 million couple families with dependants where both parents were employed (Table 1, Table 9)

## Couple families by number employed and age of youngest dependant, June 2021



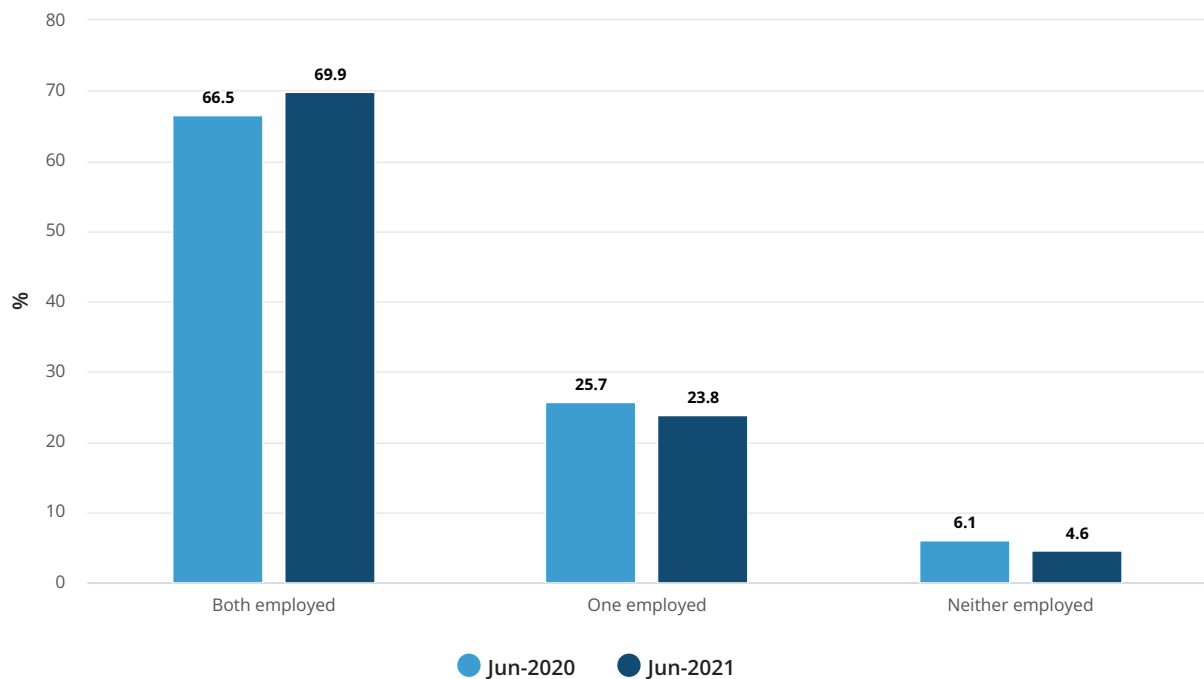
## Couple families with dependants

The proportion of couple families with dependants in which one or both parents were employed was 93.7% (2.5 million) in June 2021, up from 92.1% in June 2020. The proportion of couple families where both parents were not employed decreased from 6.1% in June 2020 to 4.6% in June 2021 (123,000 families). (Table 9)

The majority (69.9%) of couple families with dependants had both parents employed, of which 1.5 million (81.0%) had at least one child aged under 15 years. (Table 1, Table 3)

There were 493,600 couple families which had a youngest dependant aged 15–24 years living with them. This represented 8.1% of all couple families. (Table 8)

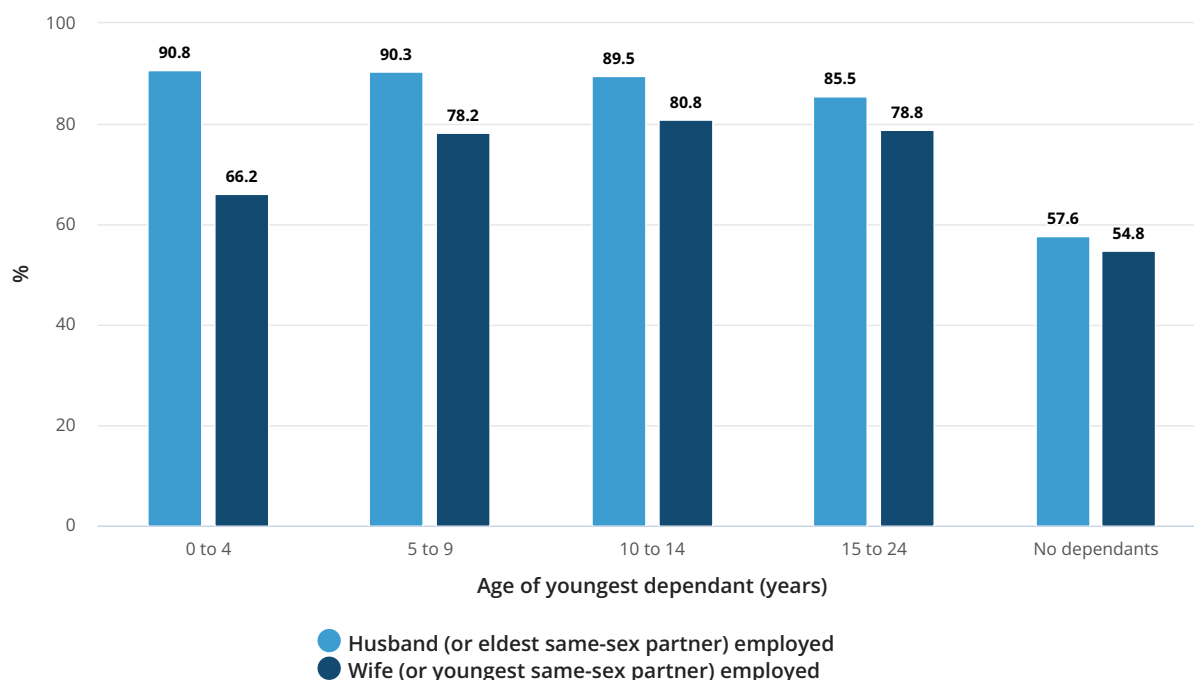
## Couple families with dependants by number employed, June 2020 to June 2021



In June 2021, the proportion of couple families with dependants where the wife (or youngest same-sex partner) was employed was 74.2%. This was lower than the proportion where the husband (or eldest same-sex partner) was employed at 89.5%.

As the age of youngest dependant increased, the proportion of couple families where the husband (or eldest same-sex partner) was employed fell from 90.8% for children aged 0-4 years to 85.5% for dependants aged 15-24. The proportion of couple families where the wife (or youngest same-sex partner) was employed rose from 66.2% for children aged 0-4 years to 78.2% for children aged 5-9 and to 78.8% for dependants aged 15-24. (Table 9)

## Couples families by employment characteristics and age of youngest dependant, June 2021



## One parent families

There were 1.1 million one parent families in June 2021, accounting for 15.0% of all families. Of these one parent families, 59.5% (651,700) had dependants (including children under 15), which is an increase of 45,600 (7.5%) since June 2011. (Table 1)

### One parent families with dependants

The vast majority (81.8%) of one parent families with children and dependants were single mother families. Of all one parent families with children and dependants, 52.7% had a youngest dependant aged 0–9 years. (Table 1, Table 9)

There were 416,700 one parent families where the parent was employed and had dependants, representing 63.9% of all one parent families with dependants. Of these families:

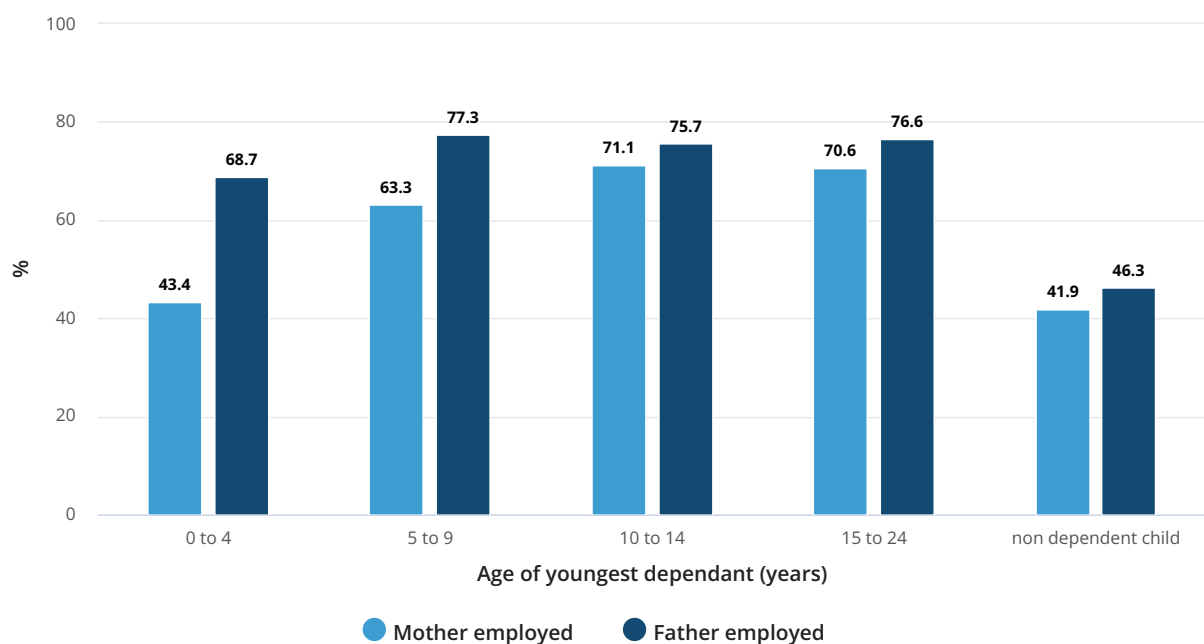
- 78.4% (327,000) had an employed single mother
- 21.6% (90,000) had an employed single father (Table 9)

In one parent families with dependants, 61.3% of single mothers were employed compared with 75.8% of single fathers. (Table 9)

Over three-quarters (77.8%) of families with employed single mothers and dependants had mothers aged between 35 and 54 years. (Table 7)

The proportion of one parent families with dependants where the parent was employed generally increased with the age of the youngest dependant. The proportion with an employed parent was lowest when the youngest dependant was under 5 (45.3%) and the highest when the youngest dependant was between 15 and 24 (72.2%). This pattern was more prominent for single mothers. (Table 9)

## One parent families by employment characteristics and age of youngest dependant, June 2021



## Jobless families

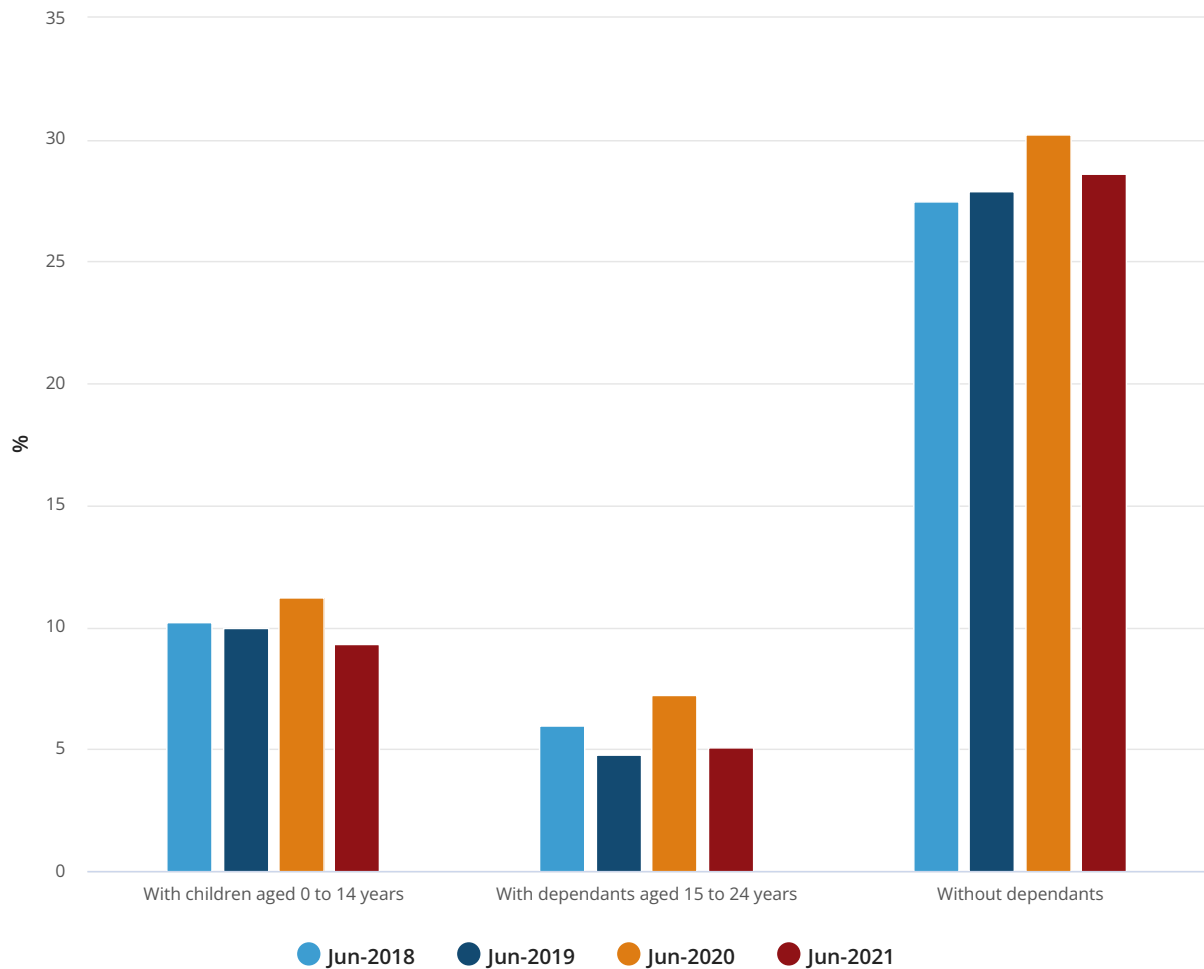
In June 2021, there were 1.4 million jobless families (down from 1.5 million in June 2020), representing 19.5% of all families, meaning each family member aged over 15 years was unemployed, retired or otherwise not in the labour force. Of these:

- 283,000 jobless families had dependants (down from 346,000 in June 2020), representing around 8.5% of all families with dependants
- An estimated 480,000 children aged 0-14 years were living in jobless families (down from 580,000 in June 2020). (Table 1, Table 4)

The number of jobless families with children under 15 (as a percentage of all families with children under 15) increased from 10.0% in June 2019 to 11.2% in June 2020, before dropping to 9.3% in June 2021.



## Jobless families by age of youngest dependant, June 2018 to June 2021



### Jobless couple families with dependants

In June 2021, there were 93,500 jobless couple families with dependants (including children under 15 and dependant students aged 15-24 years), down from 133,000 in June 2020. 80,000 (85.4%) of these families had children under 15. An estimated 162,000 children aged 0-14 years were in jobless couple families. (Table 4)

### Jobless one parent families with dependants

There were 190,000 jobless one parent families with dependants in June 2021, about one third (29.1%) of all one parent families with dependants. 90.2% of these jobless one parent families had children under 15. This equated to an estimated 315,000 children aged 0-14 years in these families. (Table 1, Table 4)

## **Jobless families without dependants**

In June 2021 there were 1.1 million jobless families without dependants, which represented 28.6% of all families without dependants. Of all jobless families without dependants:

- 1 million (90.0%) were couple families
- 114,000 (10.0%) were one parent families. (Table 1 and Table 4)

## **Dependants aged 15-24 years**

A person aged 15–24 years is a dependant if they are still attending school or attending a tertiary institution full-time and they live with one or both parents. However, they cannot be a dependant if they have a partner or child of their own who is also usually resident in the household. If that was the case, they would then form their own family within the household.

In June 2021, there were 1.4 million dependants (still attending school or attending a tertiary institution full-time) aged 15-24 years. (Table 5)

Of the 3.3 million families with children or dependants, 19.0% (628,000) had a youngest dependant aged between 15–24 years, of which 494,000 (78.6%) were couple families. (Table 9)

## **Update on families data for 2015-2018**

The ABS has corrected an issue with some family coding for the period July 2014 to June 2018 which was affecting a range of family estimates. This release includes revised families estimates for the period June 2015 to June 2018.

The issue is also impacting on, though to a lesser extent, the four "relationship in household" pivot table products (FM1-FM4) in [Labour Force, Australia, Detailed](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6291.0.55.001) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6291.0.55.001>), as well as the Table 01 spreadsheet in that release, which contains estimates by social marital status. These estimates will be revised at a later date.

## Data downloads

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Table 1: Family types

↓ [Download XLSX](#)

[80.98 KB]

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Table 2: Families by state and territory

↓ [Download XLSX](#)

[84.04 KB]

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Table 3: Labour force characteristics of families

↓ [Download XLSX](#)

[100.09 KB]

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Table 4: Jobless families and their dependants

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[89.66 KB]

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Table 5: Families by age of dependent children

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[76.7 KB]

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Table 6: Families by number of dependent children

↓ [Download XLSX](#)

[175.37 KB]

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Table 7: Families by characteristics of wives, partners and mothers and age of youngest dependent child

↓ [Download XLSX](#)

[392.22 KB]

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Table 8: Families by state and territory and age of dependent children

↓ [Download XLSX](#)

[250.54 KB]

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Table 9: Families by characteristics of parents and age of youngest dependent child

↓ [Download XLSX](#)

[193.93 KB]

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Table 10: Families with no dependent children by characteristics of wives, partners and mothers

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[115.82 KB]

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All data cubes

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[1.36 MB]

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## Relative standard errors

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## Previous catalogue number

This release previously used catalogue number 6224.0.55.001.

Data relating to the labour force status of families was also previously published in:

- [Labour Force Status and other Characteristics of Families \(https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/second+level+view?ReadForm&prodno=6224.0&viewtitle=Labour%20Force%20Status%20and%20other%20Characteristics%20of%20Families,%20Australia~Jun%202000~Latest~21/11/2000&&tabname=Past%20Future%20Issues&prodno=6224.0&issue=Jun%202000&num=&view=&\\_\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/second+level+view?ReadForm&prodno=6224.0&viewtitle=Labour%20Force%20Status%20and%20other%20Characteristics%20of%20Families,%20Australia~Jun%202000~Latest~21/11/2000&&tabname=Past%20Future%20Issues&prodno=6224.0&issue=Jun%202000&num=&view=&_) (6224.0), 1974-2000
- [Family Status and Employment Status of the Population \(https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/ProductsbyCatalogue/F926FA92D780E58ACA2585AA008276FA?OpenDocument\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/ProductsbyCatalogue/F926FA92D780E58ACA2585AA008276FA?OpenDocument) (6223.0), 1974-75

## Methodology

[Labour Force Status of Families methodology, June 2021](#)